

Panelists:

- Deborah Halliday – Office of Public Instruction (OPI)
- Dale Kimmet - OPI
- Heather Margolis – Service Learning Consultant
- Marissa Spang – Hopa Mountain
- Josh Vanek – Montana Campus Compact

**1. What programs/services in education does your organization provide and WHY?**

**Deborah Halliday:** Policy development at OPI needs to be cooperating with our communities and schools. She explained the OPI role fits into the education system because they disburse federal dollars to the schools in order that we may monitor the schools to better understand what they are doing well and where improvements can be made. Some of the goals that OPI has are:

- helping schools that are struggling to improve;
- monitoring teachers more rigorously;
- evaluating student test scores to determine strengths and weaknesses; and
- networking between schools and programs.

**Dale Kimmet:** As a former superintendent for the rural school district in Terry, Montana, one problem the community experienced was a decrease in population. There were a number of elderly, knowledgeable residents that they would have liked to use to help run programs but found that there were no trainers available to train this group of people. What he found was that there were resources within the community, but the problem was getting them trained and keeping them up and running.

**Heather Margolis:** As an AmeriCorps volunteer and having worked as a service learning coordinator from Washington, D.C., she stated that service learning is about teaching students learning strategies that provide opportunities for young people to be engaged in meaningful service; to connect their academic growth; to make school relevant; and to enrich their learning experience.

**Marissa Spang:** Economic development, reading programs for early childhood ages 0-5 years old, and science fellowship for native students that are going into the science field are among the several programs that they are currently running. They have 11 youth leadership grants that are available. The name of this grant is Youth Leaders in Service and the application starting date is April 12, 2010 and can be found on their Web site [www.hopamountain.org](http://www.hopamountain.org).

**Josh Vanek:** The Montana Campus Compact is the largest higher education organization in the United States. Their main program is the Campus Core which is made up of volunteer college students whose goal is helping community education. This incorporates college students into the lower educational institutions as a service

opportunity, not only during school hours but also after school. Involvement teaches and encourages students to do more than just instruct but to have more of an impact in their communities.

## **2. What is going on in education that we as community builders need to know?**

**Deborah Halliday:** There is more scrutiny on kids in school than in the past years. The schools are setting up higher expectations for monitoring grades. We are seeing a loss of curriculum for arts and crafts.

**Dale Kimmet:** Rural communities are limited by volunteers and training resources when they do get volunteers. We have initiated seniors coming into the schools helping kids read. This has been a great experience for both the volunteers and kids, but he feels that it was not taken far enough to be a proven educational experience. Trained volunteers are still needed in the schools.

**Heather Margolis:** The 50 percent dropout rate is a crisis in Montana; service learning is a dropout stratagey. We need to start looking at things through the kids eyes to see the problem. We need to realize that these kids are our resources now and for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Let's start using kids to teach other kids.

**Marissa Spang:** Look to schools to educate, but also look to other community based programs outside of schools; programs that have a positive outcome. Make youth feel empowered and let them lead.

**Josh Vanek:** It is getting harder to get them together due to many factors which include, but are not limited to, relevance, cost and rising tuition. The facility at the University of Montana in Missoula is rewarding volunteerism. We are also hosting a flagship program which is geared towards K-12 schools. The program's main focus will be on diversity and, at the same time, will help to open their campus up to the public.

## **3. What gaps in education programs/services exist from your perspective (local communities and/or statewide) and how can national service members and volunteers help address these gaps?**

**Deborah Halliday:** The problem has been disconnection between supply and demand. How can we reconnect everyone? One resource that she is aware of is Vision Net which helps communities share information. The emphasis is mainly on math and science now; should we start looking at putting emphasis on civic citizenship instead?

**Dale Kimmet:** It takes a lot of time to train a person to come in and run resources. Some schools are using RTI programs for training. We need to see if we can train

VISTA volunteers within the schools and communities so that we can create sustainability.

**Heather Margolis:** Once VISTA volunteers understand the challenges that schools are having; they can help take the pressure off the teachers. We need to work with youth and teach them how to be part of the community to support our future kids.

**Marissa Spang:** There is a lack of diversity awareness and of service learning in our formal education system.

**Josh Vanek:** K-12 poverty, defining what/why there is a teacher shortage, how to get teacher specialists into their fields, and to address the dropout rate.

### **Small Group Discussion**

**What are you currently doing or what could be done to address the gaps in programs/services identified by panel members?**

#### **Group one:**

- More/better links between national service and after school (21<sup>st</sup> century)
- Be supportive and provide the resources (people, programming) to schools/teachers
- Find ways to engage grades 6-12 in after school activities/programs
- Give voice to youth w/mental health issues

#### **Group two:**

- Hopa Mountain: Early literacy programs that work to close achievement gap
- Learn and Serve/engaging and developing youth leadership
- Lewistown Library: Early literacy
- After school gaming/computer volunteer database for all of Lewistown
- Summer Service Program: Engaging students in community  
Preparing community members to receive student volunteers
- Learn and Serve (OPI): Fund service learning  
Provides support/resources  
Data  
Important evaluation of programs

#### **Group three:**

- ASK
- Volunteers: Credit unions – Financial ed classes
- Networking: Building partnerships – Conferences
- Curriculum/service learning
- Volunteer coordinator/VISTA
- School staff buy in  
Incentivizing

Training

Collaborating

- Asset assessment
- Task force leaders (RSVP)

**Group four:**

- More recognition for service learning
- Training is coming
- Resources are available but the word needs to be spread
- Networking
- Breaking down preconceptions
- How do we get a VISTA volunteer of our very own?